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Faithful to the end

Congregational Studies Conference 2012

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Neville Rees
Garry Williams

Congregational Studies Conference
Papers 2012

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The papers are printed in the order in which they were given at the Conference; as usual the contributor is entirely responsible for the views expressed in his paper.

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Photographs by Dr Digby L. James

Foreword

This year sees two notable anniversaries in the life of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. The first is the tenth anniversary of the home-calling of the greatly loved and highly esteemed second general secretary of EFCC, Alan Tovey. Neville Rees has given us a warm picture of a man who was a friend and helper to so many. At the end of Neville's paper (if we can call something so personal a 'paper') there were many tributes from those who knew Alan. It is not possible to convey the love that was felt for Alan in those tributes in print. We have not attempted to do so. But this year we have experimented with videoing the Conference, and those wishing to see and hear what was said will soon be able to purchase a DVD of the whole day, including the hymn singing and the discussions.

The other great anniversary this year is that of the Great Ejection, when nearly 2,000 ministers were ejected from the Church of England because they refused to accept the imposition of the Book of Common Prayer. It is likely that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer will receive much greater media coverage than the ejected ministers and that there will be little about the problems that many godly men had with its contents. Those who refused to conform under the terms of the Act of Uniformity preferred to suffer loss of office, income, status, possessions and sometimes liberty for the sake of their consciences. The issue of religious liberty and acting according to one's conscience are issues that are still very relevant for today. We are very grateful that Garry Williams was able to present the story of 1662 in such a clear way and, as one with an Anglican background, showing us that things were not always as clear cut as Nonconformists like to think. The discussion after his paper covered several issues.

God willing we will be meeting again next year on 17 March 2013 to consider how we tackle other modern issues which the past can help us with.

Dr Digby L. James

Quinta Church, Weston Rhyn

William Alan Colwyn Tovey (December 1942–November 2002)

Neville Rees

It was in 1961 as a Theology student, preaching in Tabor Congregational Church, Maesycwmmer, that a young man approached me about a friend of his at school who was considering the Christian Ministry. I wrote an informative letter to his friend and it was in September 1961 that, amongst the first year students at Memorial College, Swansea (formerly Brecon), that person came to thank me for my correspondence. It was Alan Tovey. I was a third/final year student. He joined Philip Williams as a fresher (whom I had also written to) and Peter Jeffery. A friendship was formed with this shy young man from Hafodyrynys, near Pontypool, which continued unbroken, deepening over the years, until his untimely passing in November 2002.

I thank the Lord for the privilege of knowing this remarkable character as he developed—Alan the Christian, the Preacher, the Scholar, the Student Travelling Secretary, the Pastor, the Writer, the General Secretary of the EFCC.

Looking at his life and work, there are many telling lessons and challenges for us to take on board today. I propose to look at him in his early days—the Student Worker, the Pastor, the General Secretary, the Scholar and his final days.

1. Early Years

Born on 3 December 1942 to Colwyn and Olive Tovey at Lower Llanfrechfa, he was brought up at 14 Herbert Street, Hafodyrynys, Gwent, South Wales. He was the only son and had two younger sisters, Dianne and Beryl.

In this 'Summer Island' near the town of Pontypool he was educated at the village Primary School, Pontllanfraith Technical School and Newbridge Grammar School sixth form where he sat 'A' Levels in Maths (Pure & Applied), Physics and Chemistry. He then went to Memorial College, Swansea from 1961 to 1964, and Mansfield College, Oxford from 1964 to 1968.

Brought up by godly Christian parents, he was nurtured at the Congregational Church in the village where his father was Church Secretary and leading deacon and his mother a Sunday School teacher. His conversion was over a period of deep thinking and soul searching whilst a teenager, and he clearly confessed Christ as Saviour and Lord in 1958. At once, he felt drawn to preaching the Gospel. His attendance at the Saturday 'Youth for Christ' meetings in Pontypool, under Owen Gregory's leadership, was also instrumental and helpful.

In the third year of his University of Wales Diploma in Theology course, he came to lodge with my parents in the Manse at Llansamlet. Of course, there happened to be in the church a lively teenager Lucienne Thomas whom Beryl prodded Alan about! A romance began!!

Gaining his diploma with distinction in the History of Christian Doctrine, entry to university was now open to him. Normally it would be Swansea or one of the then four universities forming the University of Wales. Perhaps, reliving my past, I had learned, too late, of the possibility of Mansfield College, Oxford, for prospective Congregational ministers. I urged him to apply and not to be diverted by the Principal and Senate of Memorial College.

Dr Pennar Davies helped Alan and, to our delight, he was accepted. At Oxford he proved what was 'in him'—a studious spirit, a love for the Lord seen in Christian Doctrine and History. Graduating in 1966 with a Second Class Honours degree in Theology, he was accepted to research 'the Early Separatists and their Authority' until 1968. Lucy at this time had gone to Manchester University to study Biblical Studies under Prof. F.F. Bruce.

In 1969 until 1974 he was invited to take on a full-time position in the student world and so on we come to another crucial period of his life.

2. Travelling Secretary with IVF (now UCCF)

Following in the steps of Rev. Geraint Fielder, Alan's work was to visit and be a kind of Pastor at large to the Christian Unions in the university and colleges in Wales together with Bristol and Bath, with a lady secretary alongside. I personally benefited from Elwyn Davies and Rhoda Bassett (now Weddell) and Mary Clee. Welsh speaking was an advantage but Alan did not go into that side, more than adequately filled by Anne Lewis (now Davies), who remembers Alan's carrier bags!

Alan's whole character and personality developed during those years. His research at Oxford was put on the back burner as he threw himself into this work beyond the initial three years. This became a fine tuning for his future. Conferences locally, nationally and internationally were open to him. Rev. Elwyn Davies had become two secretaries in one. The Evangelical Movement of Wales had begun in 1955. The now annual Aberystwyth Conference began in 1957. I remember Alan in Aber in 1970 on the beach at Borth in his black trousers, black shoes, white shirt and braces playing cricket with the fathers and sons, young people and students. I was bowling but was nearly hit by a flying bat. 'Sorry, thought it was baseball!' and he collapsed in a heap of laughter!

Having settled at Morriston in July 1962, whilst Alan stayed in Llansamlet until he went up to Oxford in 1964, we were easily in touch. He was invited to lead a Summer Student Campaign in 1971 at Libanus. About twenty students came from the four Welsh universities plus one exile from Manchester (at

home in Llansamlet for the summer). Graham Heaps and Steven Evans were on the team. Heulwen Pritchard was to take Anne's position, but Alan continued until 1974 when he was ready, refined pastorally and intellectually, for the full-time Christian Ministry following Geraint Fielder's way before him. So we come to Alan as a Pastor.

3. Pastor at Beverley, Yorkshire

Alan began a life-long relationship (as it turned out) with Latimer Congregational Church, Beverley. His induction took place on 18 July 1974 and it was a privilege to take part with the preachers being Revs Brian Dupont and Luther Rees. Alan and Lucy married two weeks later on 3 August and their home was at 96 Grovehill Road.

3 August 1974

The congregation at Latimer took quickly to their new pastor and wife, soon seeing that they had a very gifted, able and caring servant of the Lord.

As a preacher, Alan was careful always to say what the text said, explaining carefully in a well ordered way. His style was gracious, devotional, never aggressive, but bringing you clearly to the Lord. I remember being with Peter Jeffery and hearing Alan, surprisingly to us, preach on Romans 5:1 at his dear mother's funeral in 1969.

Alan was, at heart, a loving, caring man but obviously leaned heavily on his Lord in all that he did. To walk with him through the busy shopping area (to the Coffee Shop through the leather coats and fur lined jackets) was memorable. How he remembered people and they him. Never forgotten.

Arthur Fraser refers to Alan here at Latimer as 'a man sent from God' and 'He was a deeply humble man … He was a man of meekness, of patience in the face of provocation. He showed true Christ-likeness.'

Alan threw himself into the work in all aspects. He proved to be capable with the younger people as well as the older. I visited Beverley infrequently but meeting with him was always a delight. Anniversary weekends meant going to Wentworth House, Aldbrough for a young people's weekend. Staying at 96 Grovehill Road meant you were introduced to 'healthy' eating—'Lucy's fault'.

(Even Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones preferred Lucy's homemade wholemeal bread to white bread and said, 'The whiter the bread, the sooner you're dead!')

Whilst at Latimer, the thrust was local but community too. 'Soccer School' was introduced (and is still going!). Visiting preachers from Scotland became a feature, e.g. William Still and James and George Philip. Was this the Arthur Fraser influence or that of the Crieff Conference? Alan endeared himself to many men, e.g. the late Peter Brumby. Enthusiastically he got the church actively involved in the EFCC Studies Conference/Annual Meetings in London. Dawsons and Glovers to the fore with cheap group train tickets, I recall!

With his commitment to EFCC, Alan was elected to the General Committee in 1978. Such were his contributions, visions and ideas, that when the Founding Member and then General Secretary, Revd Edward Guest offered his retirement, Alan was interviewed and received as the new General Secretary.

4. General Secretary in 1989

He took this work on, but not before 'spelling out' to the General Committee members his way forward. As one of those present, I learned that Alan had developed into a clear thinking, caring leader. He threw himself into this work with full enthusiasm. The structure of all the public meetings of the EFCC became developed into what they are today. The Ministers' Prayer Conference slowly took on a different form. Reluctantly he did give, not regularly, an historical biography, e.g. William Grimshaw. I have a copy of notes for the 1991 High Leigh Conference on 'Richard Baxter and that Kidderminster Doctrine'. He also, with the late Derek Swann and myself, planned and discussed this Conference. This showed he was an organiser and planner but always consulting. Suitable speakers were invited, e.g. Revs Eric Alexander, the Philip brothers, Alec Motyer, etc.

Alan was also keen to use and bring in people so that the work developed. Brian Cook was brought to us as a financial secretary/ administrator. He used others from Latimer, his personal secretary, Miss Elizabeth Collinson, then Maurice Lawrence from Sawbridgeworth Congregational Church. With the monies coming in from the Congregational Union funds in 1990, the EFCC Directorate Trust Ltd was formed, which released Brian Cook to be the Administrative

At Lincoln College conducting a tour of Oxford with the EFCC Committee. Bryan Cook (left) and Neville Rees (right)

Secretary. With the latter's retirement we interviewed and appointed Peter Moss and John Glover in 2000. So the EFCC office was, and is, set up in Beverley.

As General Secretary, with his qualifications and vision, he was invited to bodies outside of EFCC, obviously within Congregationalism, e.g. The Congregational Federation, the Unaffiliated Churches' body, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, the Cheshunt College Foundation, FIEC, but also the Evangelical Theological College of Wales. Locally, too, he was a governor at St Nicholas Primary School, Beverley.

The World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship was formed in 1986 in Pilgrim Hall, London. It meets every three years, so Alan with Lucy attended in Brazil in 1989, Australia in 1992, Boston (USA) in 1995, Capetown in 1998 and Canada in 2001. Again it was his initiative to pay the expenses of delegates appointed to represent EFCC. I was privileged to be with them at the Capetown and Canada conferences with unforgettable experiences!

5. The Scholar—BA 1966 / MA 1971 / BD 1991

In Alan Tovey we had a typical Welsh lad not from the valleys but from a village in the style of David Morgan of Yspyty Ystwyth, Humphrey Jones of Tre'Ddol (both 1859), Evan Roberts of Loughor (1904); but more so a John Penry scholar from Oxford.

a. His articles in Magazines:

He had book reviews approved in Congregational History Circle Magazine, and the Journal of the URC History Society. These covered Horton Davies; John Gibbs, Newport Pagnall Puritan. In the EMW Magazine Isaac Watts 1975; 'John Bunyan' 1978 (Aug/Sep); Luther Rees 1983 (June/July).

b. His Lectures:

• In 1973 he gave a powerful paper at the Westminster Conference on his research field under the watchful eye of Dr Lloyd Jones as Chairman: 'Adding to the Church in the Theology of the Elizabethan Separatists'.

• In 1993 The Congregational Library Lecture, 'Whatever Happened to the Separatists?'

• In 1993 at the EFCC Congregational Studies Conference with Dr Tudur Jones, 'Some Separatists'.

He was also on the Staff at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales (now known as WEST) lecturing in Church History.

c. Interest in Theological Trends and Books:

Often articles would come to me with no letter attached. Maybe a comment, 'Thought you would be interested'. He was an avid reader and student who retained what he gleaned. He edited *Telling Another Generation* together with Mike Plant, himself contributing a chapter on death and bereavement.

d. His Research Degree Thesis 1991, awarded Bachelor of Divinity (Oxon):

This is his major work. The subject of 'Forms of Authority in the Theology of the Elizabethan Separatists' makes him an authority on this period.

It is as detailed and thorough a work as you could have. It covers 364 pages, where he examines the well known trio of Barrow, Greenwood and Penry, but adds Robert Browne and Harrison—basically from Anglicanism to Nonconformist Presbyterianism and finally Separatism. The lives, thinking, belief and practice of these choice men could well be the catalyst, certainly platform/foundation, for true Nonconformity and, ultimately, the Great Ejection of 1662.

I was taken with their careful, simple, yet profound view/understanding of the doctrine of the Church. Also, the doctrine of Scripture, considering that they were pre-1611 AV, only having maybe the Geneva Bible, but certainly the Hebrew and Greek texts from which they worked. We ought to give them greater value and worth than we have. Perhaps they are under the shadow of the Marian Martyrs of the 1550s—Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley—when all six should be likened to the famous six greats of Gospel light and certainly worthy of the 'Well done, good and faithful servants'.

What possibly struck and stuck with Alan was how these men were steeped in the truth of the Christian Gospel. They had a clear unshakeable doctrine of the Scriptures. Of John Penry he states, 'When he read and studied the Scriptures (in their original languages) he heard the voice of God in every word.' Also Alan's view of the Church locally and globally would have been strengthened. Influenced by John Calvin, the Separatists saw a Church formed of a gathered, redeemed company covenanting with the Lord Jesus Christ as Authority and Head, and where the Word of God was faithfully preached, the two Sacraments carefully and properly administered, and true Christ-like discipline was exercised in line with Matthew 18.

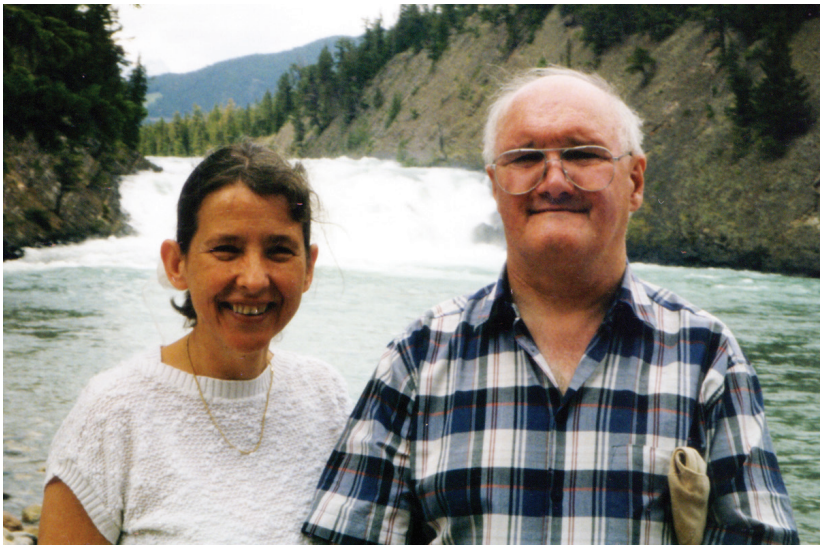
e. What could be lost?

During his last sabbatical in 2001, at Westminster College, Cambridge, Alan was working on a small book on these major personalities of 16th Century Separatism; and also a brief biography of Thomas Jackson the 19th Century Methodist leader.

His work on Richard Baxter for High Leigh Prayer Conference 1991 could well be printed and made available. Work on George Herbert has also been done!

6. His Last Days

There were some thoughts about illnesses and whether they might be serious. In July 2001 in Canada he promised me to have an investigation. However, it was not until the following February that he was diagnosed with cancer. It was



Bow Springs, Banff, Canada 12 July 2001

to be only nine months of severe illness, treatment and slight remission before the final weeks in November. On Monday morning, 18 November 2002, he went to be with the Lord, two weeks before his 60th birthday.

As I preached from Philippians 1:23–24 at his Thanksgiving service in Latimer Church, this last period was as Paul expresses in one word, DILEMMA. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea and eventually set free, but for Alan, and Lucy with him, there was to be no complete recovery. On my own retirement from the Pastorate in July, I was asked by the General Committee of the EFCC to be Acting General Secretary, to which I agreed, but only to be alongside Alan. It was a delight to us, and him and Lucy, that in the June they attended our daughter's marriage in Morriston, Swansea.

In the September, Beryl and I stayed with them for a few days and saw what strain Lucy was under in returning to school. I was constantly in touch aiming to try and bring Alan back into work for two days a week. Further visits to Princess Royal Hospital, Hull, in October, eventually culminated in his being hospitalised for his last days in November.

My last visit to him was after the Ministers' Prayer Conference on Thursday and Friday. It was not easy to see him, though I commented on his looking like Sean Connery—bearded! My previous visit in October was a kind of preparing for Heaven with Peter Moss and Neil Stewart. We sang the new tune to 'Before the throne of God above'. It was so meaningful that he asked for the last verse again—'One with himself I cannot die, My soul is purchased

with his blood, My life is hid with Christ on high, With Christ, my Saviour and my God, with Christ my Saviour and my God.'

The Glover sisters, Katherine and Sarah, were outside and they went in to see 'Uncle Alan' as he was to them. I am not sure if chronologically afterwards the next day he called all the doctors and staff in for him to thank them for all they had done for him, which was so typical of Alan.

To assess his contribution to this life is difficult but I would highlight some features.

Alan was, and is:—

Quoting the present Archbishop of Canterbury, 'The finest Christian I have known.'

A **fine Christian** man, true and honest in all his life.

A **humble man** with outstanding ability, humour, love and understanding. He never had the platform he deserved but he never sought it.

A **thankful man,** never empty handed. Parking his car for over two weeks in 2001 when we went to Canada for the WECF in our neighbour's driveway warranted a present on returning, to which she replied what a lovely, thoughtful young man.

A **thinking** history-interested man.

A **theologian**—He grappled with and developed understanding of the full Gospel of our Saviour.

A **man of great prayer**—encouraging Latimer on days of prayer.

A **people's man**—He had no difficulty with any ages. He always asked after our three children and when Matthew and family lived in Australia for over four years, he was in touch regularly. My mother became his!

A **private, loving man,** yet he related to you in surprising ways. In March I suggested Derek Swann and myself should visit him. On that visit, which was memorable for all, he thanked us with these words, 'Derek, thank you for being my mentor and always there for me. Neville you have been my brother close to hand.' Personally, interestingly, he never shortened my name!

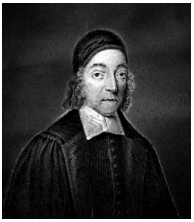
Finally, in Alan Tovey, absorbed in History, we have an antique modern man. He lived life fully, enjoying coffee or 'afternoon tea' in notable places, e.g. Banff, Canada; Capetown; especially Beverley, of course, and usually at the Tea Rooms near the Minster.

It has been my overwhelming privilege to have known him and to love him and to miss him!

At the dinner table, Loughborough University, 2000, for the EFCC Family Conference. Derek Swann (left) and Arthur Fraser (right)

At the EFCC Ministers' Prayer Conference speaking to Peter Taylor

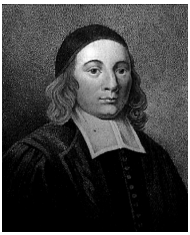
Edmund Calamy



Philip Henry

John Owen

Richard Baxter



John Flavel

Thomas Manton

Thomas Watson

Thomas Goodwin

William Jenkyn

Some of the ministers ejected in 1662

The Great Ejection of 1662

Garry Williams

The old and the new in 1662

In many ways the Great Ejection of 1662 was not a new crisis; it was the next episode of a conflict that had been unfolding since the religious settlement legislated by Elizabeth I in 1559. Under her half-brother Edward VI the Reformation had reflected the slogan *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*. The king and the leaders of his church believed in the need for a continuing process of reform. Thomas Cranmer, who had waited so patiently under Henry VIII, now actively advanced the cause of reform, replacing one Prayer Book with another, and apparently planning a third, still more Genevan edition.[1] By contrast, Elizabeth, clearly but less hotly Protestant, wanted her reform to be enshrined in a single, fixed settlement. Her motto *Semper Eadem* was reflected in her religious policy, and in her mind the 1559 Act of Uniformity was not to be altered. Despite Elizabeth's static perspective, the vision of dynamic reform remained and grew in the church, evidenced by zealous attempts to preach the gospel, campaigns against vestments, and attempts to reorder the government of the church. Here, in these competing visions of the Reformation, we find the origin of Puritanism. The Puritans were those who sought to progress the reform of the church on all fronts. Their opponents were those who were satisfied with the changes that had been made. I do not mean to suggest that the Puritans alone sought the progress of the gospel in the nation. In the early days there were many friends of gospel preaching who resisted the Puritan movement. Men like Archbishop John Whitgift held to a Reformed soteriology and laboured to see faithful ministers of the word trained and deployed, and yet at the same time defended the episcopal settlement. Indeed, even those who sought to change the system of church government under Elizabeth for the large part remained within her church, thus providing examples of Anglican Puritans, albeit uneasy about aspects of their Anglicanism.

Under James I and Charles I things became much more difficult and more polarized. The defence of episcopacy became stronger and was increasingly tied to the security of the monarchy itself. Especially under Charles the controversy expanded to include soteriology and the sacraments with the Arminianism and ritualism of William Laud and his party. Charles posed an increased threat to the Puritans because he not only stopped progress but also reversed it, with a ban on preaching on predestination and the return of elements of the Mass. These religious factors combined with others, such as punitive taxation without parliamentary consent, to trigger the Civil War. Behind all

the developments lay what Claire Cross describes as the 'essentially autocratic nature of Laudianism' and the uncompromising stance of a king who believed that he was the Lord's anointed.[2]

The question facing the nation when the monarchy was restored in 1660 was therefore broadly the same as it had been since the time of Elizabeth. Those involved at the time saw this continuity with previous decades, because they understood that they were part of a long process of reformation. When the Presbyterians presented their exceptions to the Book of Common Prayer to the restored bishops on 4 May 1661, they highlighted the progressive nature of reform since the sixteenth century:

> And albeit we have a high and honourable esteem of those godly and learned bishops and others, who were the first compilers of the public liturgy, and do look upon it as an excellent and worthy work, for that time, when the Church of England made her first step out of such a mist of popish ignorance and superstition wherein it formerly was involved; yet,—considering that all human works do gradually arrive at their maturity and perfection, and this in particular, being a work of that nature, hath already admitted several emendations since the first compiling thereof.[3]

Reform, they understood, takes time. The old question recurred: which church, with what degree of reform, would the monarch establish?

Even the phenomenon of ejecting those unhappy with the degree of reform established (or the denial of it) was not new. Previous ejections had occurred under Mary I and Elizabeth I, but perhaps the most notable previous example for our purposes was under James I. According to John Spurr, after the Hampton Court Conference between the Puritans and the king around seventy-three to eighty-three clergy were deprived of their benefices for non-subscription to the Prayer Book.[4]

Both the issues and the ejections of the Restoration were thus continuous with previous episodes. In terms of its lasting significance, however, the Great Ejection went far beyond earlier examples, because unlike them it had lasting effects on the shape of the church in England. The Great Ejection simultaneously fixed the character of the Church of England and created permanent Dissent. This is the verdict of J. C. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool:

> Against the policy of the ruling party in the Church of England, under the Stewarts, I always shall protest. I do not feel the scruples which Baxter and his ejected brethren felt about the Act of Uniformity. Much as I respect them, I think them wrong and misguided in their judgments. But I think that Archbishop Sheldon, and the men who refused to go one step to meet them, were far more wrong and far more misguided. I believe they did an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired, by sowing the seeds of endless divisions. They were the men who laid the foundation of English dissent. I believe they recklessly threw away a golden opportunity of doing good. They might easily have made my own beloved

> Church far more effective and far more useful than she ever has been by wise and timely concessions. They refused to do this, and, instead of a healing measure, brought forward their unhappy Act of Uniformity. I disavow any sympathy with their proceedings, and can never think of them without the deepest regret.[5]

Ryle thus argued that the Ejection was an act of 'suicidal blindness' which narrowed the Church of England.[6] The recent work of Stephen Hampton on anti-Arminianism within the established church after 1662 warns us against exaggerating the eradication of Reformed theology from the church.[7] Evidently a Reformed Anglican soteriology remained a reality after the Ejection, and some of the assessments of late Stuart and Anglican theology have been too bleak. But this adjustment to our understanding should not lead us to underestimate the impact of ejecting 2,000 godly gospel preachers from the national church. Even if Reformed theology and practice continued within Anglicanism, it was terribly weakened by the exclusion of such men. Outside the Church of England, the existence of a widespread lay movement supportive of Nonconformity resulted in what A. G. Matthews terms 'the rise of organized Dissent'.[8] This kind of permanent fixed division was a new phenomenon.

The restriction of religious freedom by the Puritans

It is easy for us to import a modern sensibility into the seventeenth century, to make Oliver Cromwell a religious libertarian interested solely in setting the people free. But we need to remember that, especially in the face of necessity, the Puritans were themselves capable of violating what many in today's society take to be inalienable rights. The dilemma of liberty that they faced is perennial: they wanted enough liberty, but not so much as to allow elements that they wished to exclude. The Puritan answer to this problem was quite clear, and it was not the answer of our own day. If it is wrong simply to restrict religious liberty, then they themselves were also guilty. For example, in 1645 the Book of Common Prayer was abolished, and episcopal government was dismantled in 1646. Neither Prayer Book services nor bishops were permitted. The 1648 Ordinance for the Punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies threatened prison for various theological errors, including denial of the Holy Trinity, the Protestant canon as the word of God, and infant baptism. The 1650 Blasphemy Act was much less specific, but it still threatened prison for errors in the doctrine of God and for the denial of heaven and hell. Apart from what we might term the 'eschatological exception' of the Jews from 1656, toleration in the Interregnum was, at least in theory, Trinitarian, anti-Anglican toleration.

According to Anne Whiteman, A. G. Matthews said that between 1643 and 1660 around 2,425 benefices were at some point under sequestration, and around 650 cathedral clergy and 829 university men were turned out. Obviously these were not the exact numbers of individuals ejected since some

would have held plural offices, but the numbers of ejected clergy during the Interregnum were still very high.[9] In his great record of ejected clergy Edmund Calamy (1671–1732, the third successive bearer of the name) acknowledged that the persecution had come from both sides. He even expressed a welcome to the work of his critic John Walker who produced an Anglican counter-narrative, a work that Matthews describes as a 'monumental piece of hate and patience'.[10] Calamy hoped for better from both sides in the future:

> I have great hopes, that the reviving the memory of past Harshness and Severity on both Sides, and the dislike that each Side discovers of it, when their own Friends are the Sufferers, may produce at length such a general Abhorrence of all Constraint or force in Matters of Religion, as may help to preserve Honest Men of any Sort for the future, from all Violence to their Consciences, and anything that the Patients can call Persecution while the Agents are apt to give it another Turn.[11]

Despite the similarities, there was at least one significant difference between the ejections. While Matthews comments that the sufferings of the Episcopalians 'were greater than those of the Nonconformists', he rightly follows Calamy in observing the different contexts: 'the one was a time of Civil War, the other ostensibly a time of peace and reconciliation'.[12] Given the context, the urgent expulsion of ardent royalist Episcopalians was more understandable than the cruel raft of legislation passed against politically spent Nonconformists.

The vulnerability of the Puritan project in 1660

How much political and religious progress had been made by 1660? Was the Restoration the undoing of a finished work? We need to be cautious here. The 1640s and 50s were decades of great theological fruitfulness, and no doubt in some areas the gospel made considerable progress on the ground, but England was not then Christian England. What the nation became on paper, it was not in practice. For example, while the Westminster Assembly produced the Directory of Public Worship in 1644 and it replaced the Prayer Book in January 1645, fewer than a quarter of the parishes appear to have purchased a copy.[13] Judging by communion numbers and other external measures, Spurr concludes that 'the English were not conspicuously pious in the 1650s'.[14]

In fact, despite the formal legislative position, during the 1650s England was experiencing what Philip Dixon has called the 'disintegration' and 'evisceration' of the Trinitarian consensus.[15] Most problematic of all was the proliferation of sects. Whether or not we think that the toleration of such sects is the right price to pay for liberty, their progress was dangerous because of their influence within the politically powerful Army. There was for many concerned observers a recognized pattern of spiritual declension as individuals 'fell off' from presbyterianism to independency to anabaptism to Arminianism to mortalism to scepticism to atheism.[16] Some were initially optimistic. In

his fascinating work comparing Baxter and Owen, Tim Cooper contrasts the perspectives of the two men on the state of the nation. In 1646 Owen was the optimist. Surveying England's religious condition, he saw a field full of corn and complained about those who focused on the weeds. By contrast, Baxter in 1650 saw a pond about to burst the banks restraining it.[17] Yet Owen himself soon came to expend massive efforts writing against the growing tide of Socinianism. Like Dixon, Mark Kishlansky does not exaggerate when he says that 'Calvinism was disintegrating'.[18]

The Restoration did not, therefore, represent the loss of some already-achieved spiritual ideal. In 1660 the Puritan project was still very much a work in progress, and that was largely the source of its vulnerability. On the political level, England was still a country in search of a new form of rule. The government never stabilized as one parliament after another was dissolved or purged, and as different patterns of government were attempted, including the rule of the Major-Generals from 1654 and the offer of the crown to Cromwell in the 'Humble Petition and Advice' of 1657. As Kishlansky comments, the Protectorate 'was built upon quicksand and avoided being sucked down only by the remarkable personality of Oliver Cromwell. His death sounded the knell of the Revolution itself.'[19] Indeed, as Cromwell sought to provide stability the desperate circumstances compelled him to violate the very freedom that had been the aim of the Revolution itself. As we might expect, John Milton elegantly stated the tension in his work *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Commonwealth*: 'More just it is that a less number compel a greater to retain their liberty, than that a greater number compel a less to be their fellow slaves'.[20] The Interregnum was a time of political opportunity, ultimately unrealized.

Its religious character was similar: by 1660 no new coherent religious settlement had been agreed. One example illustrates how theological disputes and political happenstance hampered the various attempts to reach a clear settlement.[21] On 3 December 1653 the Instrument of Government provided the nation with a new written constitution. Article 35 stated that 'the Christian religion, as contained in the Scriptures, be held forth and recommended as the public profession of these nations'.[22] The next two articles protected those who disagreed with the religion publicly set forth, provided they maintained faith in Jesus Christ. With this new settlement in place, Parliament formed a committee of MPs to provide a statement of the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and that committee in turn delegated the work to a group of ministers. The group met in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey (where the Assembly had met) during November and December 1654, and produced a brief confession. Among others, it included Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye (Congregationalists), Richard Vines and Thomas Manton (Presbyterians). John Owen was in the Chair. Richard Baxter also

attended, though his role is not fondly recalled. He stubbornly insisted that the statement of doctrine should use only biblical phraseology, which meant that, as Paul Lim puts it, his 'main role during the assembly became that of a dissenting maverick'.[23] Owen in particular was provoked by Baxter's stubbornness and the difficulty it created in opposing Socinianism, especially in stating the divinity of the Holy Spirit. When the parliament was dissolved by Cromwell in January 1655, the proposals came to nothing. The Humble Petition of 1657 also set out the need for a confession of faith, but it too never materialized.

In 1660 the theological identity of the Church in England thus remained unclear. To some extent this was the point: Cromwell's preference for liberty generated a wide diversity of churches within the tithe-supported parish system. But even that policy required some definition of the boundaries of what was and was not theologically acceptable, and many attempts to put such boundaries in place had failed. Technically, from 1645 presbyterianism was the established form of church government. But the strength of the Independent influence, especially in the Army, meant that presbyterianism actually achieved only what Matthews terms 'a shadowy existence' on the ground.[24] The reality by 1660 was what Whiteman describes as 'a curious kind of ecclesiastical anarchy'.[25] The parish system remained intact, as did the tithe, but it supported a chaotic variety of churches.

On both political and religious fronts, the story of the interregnum might be titled 'After the unthinkable, what?'. The failure to settle the political and religious questions left the Puritan Revolution very vulnerable. When Oliver Cromwell died, despite the welcome given to his son Richard as Protector, the centripetal power of the older man's personality passed from the scene, and the different political and religious parties began to spin apart. The Restoration occurred so unexpectedly and with such rapidity that the Puritans were left scrambling to propose a new settlement that might survive under the king. Here their failure to achieve a settlement became apparent: had there been a clear and coherent political and religious policy in place then the sudden race to settle a new uniformity would not have been necessary. In so far as Oliver Cromwell was able to hold together his governments without such a settlement, the Puritan Revolution was the victim of his own success. I do not mean by this comment to stand in judgement over the godly men of Cromwellian England. The challenge they faced was unprecedented. Politically, the removal of the king was a greater upheaval than anything seen during the sixteenth century. If you have killed 'the Lord's anointed', what do you do next? Theologically, the diversity that had emerged made the work of settling religion in a manner acceptable to both Parliament and the Army, to Presbyterian and Independent, near impossible. My overwhelming feeling when studying this period is one of sympathy and bafflement. Even with the

benefit of centuries of hindsight it is hard to imagine what settlement would have worked.

Internal disagreements among the Puritans

Despite sympathizing with the difficulty of the challenge, we must nonetheless reckon with the enervating effect of disagreement among the Puritans. I am uneasy about apportioning blame for this disagreement since it would be all too easy for today's Presbyterians to blame yesterday's Independents, or for today's Independents to blame yesterday's Presbyterians. We may be tempted by the possibility of scoring points from history for our own preferred form of church government, but it usually makes bad history. In fact the explanation for the failure is often complex and frequently neither theological nor ecclesiastical. The proposed confession of 1654, for example, failed because the Parliament was dissolved. Despite the difficulties along the way, the theologians did their work and it was a political turn that scuppered their plans. Where the explanations for failure are to be found among the ministers, they can be traced to both sides: Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his 1962 lecture rightly identifies the divisions among the Puritans as a major cause of their failure, but he narrows the explanation too far when he pins the blame to the 'intransigent' Presbyterians.[26]

Example 1: The Independents and the fall of Richard Cromwell

There is one charge made that blames the Independent John Owen for the demise of Richard Cromwell, and thus for opening the door to the Restoration. After a promising welcome to Richard's protectorate, it quickly became apparent that he would not be able to hold together a government as his father had. 1658–60 saw an increasing struggle for power between the Army and Parliament. On 21 April General Charles Fleetwood ordered a general rendezvous of regiments for the next day. Cromwell ordered a counter-rendezvous at Whitehall, but received a very small response. Fleetwood and Major-General John Desborough then met with Cromwell that night and pressed him to dissolve Parliament. The republicans argued for restoration of the Rump parliament, and the officers reluctantly agreed. On 25 May Cromwell submitted to the authority of the Rump, effectively resigning the Protectorate. The outcome would not be what the Army officers had sought.

Richard Baxter saw the hand of John Owen behind the collapse of the Protectorate, and thus behind all the suffering that followed it. Owen had gathered a church involving Army officers at Fleetwood's home, Wallingford House. Baxter wrote in 1670 that Owen was 'the greater persuader of *Fleetwood*, *Desborough*, and the rest of the Officers of the Army who were his *Gathered Church*, to compel *Rich. Cromwell* to dissolve his Parliament; which being done he fell with it'.[27] The basis of this indictment of Owen was rather thin: Matthew Sylvester told Edmund Calamy that he had heard from Richard

Stretton and William Taylor a claim made by Thomas Manton! Manton, Calamy records, had in April 1659 passed the door of the room in which Owen was meeting with the officers at Wallingford house and had heard Owen's voice saying 'He must come down, and he shall come down', though Manton only made the connection to Cromwell later.[28] This multi-hand testimony was the basis of the charge against Owen. As Cooper comments, the evidence is tenuous, and it was contradicted by Owen's early biographer, John Asty. Asty quotes a letter from James Forbes of Gloucester reporting that at the time of Cromwell's fall a minister was asked to preach for Owen in the Chapel at Whitehall 'for he is sick, and is not able to preach, and the cause of his present illness is his dissatisfaction at what they are doing at *Wallingford*-House, with respect to the Protector.'[29] Owen, it seems, cannot be blamed for the fall of Cromwell. The blame is, however, more feasibly assigned to the Army officers, since they were the ones who pressured Cromwell to recall Parliament. But even they could not possibly have foreseen, and certainly did not seek, the Restoration settlement that followed it.

Example 2: The Presbyterians and the search for comprehension rather than toleration

It was not the Independents of the Army but General Monck, a Presbyterian, who drove through the invitation to Charles to take the throne. In February 1660 Parliament was restored with the members excluded in 1648 present again. The revived Long Parliament was hardly Anglican: it renewed the Solemn League and Covenant and adopted the Westminster Confession. Before it dissolved itself Monck was made the Lord General, with a Council of State and a date for new parliamentary elections. The new Convention Parliament met on 25 April 1660. With the House of Lords back in place, the whole Parliament voted on 1 May to restore Charles. It was the Presbyterian leaders—Edmund Calamy the Elder (1600–66), Edward Reynolds, Thomas Manton, and William Spurstowe—who went to Holland to talk with Charles. While in Holland, Charles promised a high degree of toleration alongside an Anglican settlement. In the Declaration of Breda on 4 April 1660 he insisted that he wished to restore bishops and the Prayer Book, but he also affirmed that he would protect the liberty of the people:

> We do declare a liberty to tender consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted, or called in question, for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an act of parliament, as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to us, for the full granting that indulgence.[30]

As events unfolded, this ideal would remain unrealized. There were in effect two religious settlements at the start of the reign of Charles II, and they brought increasing degrees of narrowness and the betrayal of his promise of

toleration. The Presbyterians themselves did not want mere toleration anyway; they sought comprehension within the national church, which meant they increasingly drew further from the Independents and closer to the Anglicans. There was a sad irony in this kind of situation, expressed in the words of Jeremiah Burroughes from 1645: 'Those that come nearest together, yet differing in some things, are many times at greater variance one with another, then those who differ in more things from them'.[31]

On 1 June 1660 the Long Parliament was formally dissolved by the king and the existing Convention Parliament was declared legal. In one of its few moves toward settlement, this parliament decided what to do about clergy who had previously been dispossessed and replaced. On 29 December 1660 the Act for Conforming and Restoring of Ministers was passed. The Act required oaths of allegiance and supremacy and agreement with infant baptism, and it restored clergy dispossessed during the Interregnum. They were to be given their livings back provided they paid compensation to the man they replaced. As a result, 695 ministers were ejected (this number forms part of the usual count of 2,000 ejected). Baxter lost Kidderminster under this legislation, but as Matthews argues, what was to come in 1662 would be far worse: 'That Baxter, to take the outstanding example, had in 1660 to restore the living of Kidderminster to the sequestered vicar, was a trivial matter compared with the fact that after Aug. 1662 all public pulpits were closed to him.'[32] It is also true that the Act, though it resulted in ejections, was different from what would follow because it was dealing with an outstanding problem rather than creating a new one.

Apart from this, there were encouraging signs for the Presbyterians in this first phase of settlement. Parliament appointed a committee to advise on the religious policy to be adopted and the Presbyterians submitted proposals. They revived the idea of reduced episcopacy outlined by James Ussher, insisting that the Solemn League and Covenant only excluded the kind of prelacy recently exercised and not 'the true ancient primitive episcopacy or presidency as it was balanced and managed by a due commixtion of presbyters therewith'.[33] The high point for the Presbyterians came in October 1660 when the king issued the Worcester House Declaration, a set of proposals that had been formulated with Presbyterian representatives in his presence and that accepted a reduced episcopacy. In the Declaration the King states that episcopal government will be restored since it supports the monarchy, but with a series of changes: the bishops will frequently preach, the size of the dioceses will be reduced, and more suffragans will be appointed. Crucially, 'No bishop shall ordain, or exercise any part of jurisdiction which appertains to the censures of the church, without the advice and assistance of the presbyters'.[34] The assisting presbyters will be made up of a dean and chapter along with others elected by a majority vote of the presbyters in the diocese, and they will always be involved

in matters of ordination and jurisdiction. Discipline will be in the hands of the ministers, with a right of appeal to the rural dean who will deliberate along with a further group of three or four elected presbyters from the deanery. Only after that would the bishop be involved, and he would deliberate with any clergy who wished to attend. On the liturgy, the King expresses his conviction that the Book of Common Prayer is 'the best we have seen', but he constitutes a group to review it given that some take exception to it.[35] As Whiteman comments, this was 'the most generous suggestion of accommodation ever made to the Puritans', and the level of detail in it suggests that the King saw it as a genuine proposal for a long-term settlement.[36] Bishoprics were also offered to Baxter, Calamy, and Reynolds (who alone accepted), and deaneries to Manton and William Bates.

In November the Presbyterians tried to rush the Bill containing the Worcester House proposals through Parliament. At this point the differences between the Puritans took their toll: the Bill, the most promising settlement offer made by the King, was voted down by Independents and the court party. Spurr comments on the involvement of the Independents in defeating the Presbyterian attempts at comprehension: 'Whether the Congregationalists consciously sought to prevent comprehension is a matter of interpretation, but in practice their determination, under the leadership of the redoubtable John Owen, to achieve a toleration, repeatedly thwarted the delicate political negotiations for a comprehension.'[37] Nonetheless, the overtures to the Presbyterians continued into 1661, with invitations to the Savoy Conference issued on 25 March 1661. From April to July 1661 the Conference saw twelve Presbyterians and twelve bishops meet to attempt agreement. Spurr comments that the Presbyterians threw away their chances by being disunited, and Whiteman describes as 'misapplied zeal' Baxter's resolve 'to strive with the Anglicans almost single-handed in these discussions'.[38] By July it was evident that the attempt had failed.

Were the Presbyterians duped by the government in all of these negotiations? If they were, then their abandonment of the Independents is all the more culpable, since they should have realized that their aspiration was a vain conceit. Robert S. Bosher argues that there was all along another agenda operating alongside the positive gestures to the Presbyterians. For him, Anglican policy was, as Whiteman summarizes, 'at best disingenuous, and at worst double-faced'.[39] Bosher has shown that there was an organized and determined Laudian movement throughout the Interregnum, and that the Anglican hierarchy was indeed rapidly reconstructed after the Restoration. By autumn 1660 most of the cathedral chapters were full, and there were only two vacancies left on the episcopal bench by 6 January 1661.[40] It is possible to construe many of the events of 1660–61 as indications of insincerity. It was in part court MPs who voted out the Worcester House Declaration. On

10 April, just after the invitations to the Savoy Conference were sent out, the writs gathering the Anglican Convocation were issued. On this reading the Laudians were deliberately stringing the Presbyterians along while they began the task of rebuilding the Anglican church and waited hopefully for a new Parliament. But none of this evidence necessarily means that the government's policy was insincere. The vote against the Worcester House Declaration can be understood as a defence of the royal prerogative rather than an indication of insincerity.[41] Whiteman argues that the Convocation had strictly limited terms that protected the integrity of the Conference.[42] Even Bosher himself notes that the activity of Convocation was hampered 'at every turn' by the Conference, and he maintains that the Anglicans 'did not embark on the Conference with a pre-determined attitude of *non-possumus*'.[43] Whiteman shows how the royal policy can be understood to fit together:

> Given the assumption that concessions, whatever they might be, would be within the framework of a restored episcopal Church in which the Royal Supremacy was a reality, an assumption the moderate Puritans seem to have accepted, there was nothing necessarily double-faced in the basic policy of the Government and the Anglican leaders in the summer and early autumn of 1660, unless the Declaration of Breda were to be regarded as abrogating all previously established ecclesiastical order.[44]

In short, I am not convinced that the King was duplicitous in his dealings with the Presbyterians (I say this as no enthusiast for the Stuart monarchy!), or that they were duped.

The Presbyterians may not have been duped, but why did they enter into negotiations to seek a comprehensive settlement that would locate them with the Episcopalians within the church, leaving the Independents outside? Was this a betrayal of their former allies against episcopacy? To answer this question we need to recall some of the positions taken by the different groups during the Restoration period (there were others, of many degrees). For many of the Anglicans the situation was simple: the Church of England needed to be restored with a uniformity enforced by Act of Parliament. The goal was Anglican uniformity rather than comprehension, let alone toleration. At the other end of the spectrum were the Independents who sought a settlement that would see them tolerated. There were those who favoured a total toleration, a religious *carte blanche*, but the more mainstream Independents wanted the kind of Trinitarian Protestant toleration that Cromwell had allowed. Caught in the middle were the Presbyterians who sought to secure their position by constructing its inclusion within the Church of England. They would not seek toleration because it would automatically define, and therefore fix them as being, outside the church. Accepting such a position would mean abandoning the long struggle for comprehension that dated back to the time of their Elizabethan forebears. It would mean becoming separatists when they did not

believe in separatism. Though they could not have guessed it, this would be their future after the Toleration Act of 1689. John Spurr comments on that later period: 'The puritans had overwhelmingly been reformists, prepared for defiance only as a last resort; but now they had to carve out a future for themselves as part of the spectrum of sects.'[45] For now, after the Restoration, comprehension looked like the safer option. A further fear that drove the Presbyterians to seek comprehension as opposed to toleration was the spectre of Rome and the sects. A comprehensive settlement would stand more chance of excluding theologically unacceptable extremes. This is the explanation of the Presbyterian position in 1660–61: they sought comprehension rather than toleration because toleration would surrender the established church to the Episcopalians, and because it would open the floodgates to every weed of doctrine. Their reasoning in the midst of the crisis is expressed clearly in a letter dated 10 August 1660 written by Edmund Calamy, Simeon Ashe, and Thomas Manton to Scottish divines asking about the likely settlement:

> The general stream and current is for the old prelacy in all its pomp and height, and therefore it cannot be hoped for, that the presbyterial government should be owned as the public establishment of this nation, while the tide runneth so strongly that way; and the bare toleration of it will certainly produce a mischief, whilst papists, and sectaries of all sorts, will wind in themselves under the covert of such a favour: therefore no course seemeth likely to us to secure religion and the interests of Christ Jesus our Lord, but by making presbytery a part of the public establishment; which will not be effected but by moderating and reducing episcopacy to the form of synodical government, and a mutual condescendency of both parties in some lesser things, which fully come within the latitude of allowable differences in the church.[46]

This was the dilemma that, rightly or wrongly, divided the Presbyterians from their fellow Puritans and lured them into a courtship with the King that would ultimately prove fruitless.

The way in which the Presbyterian hopes crumbled as the second settlement emerged shows that the events of the Restoration were really beyond the control of either the Independents or the Presbyterians, and that it is unreasonable to blame either party for the aggressive Anglican resurgence embodied in the new legislative programme. While the Convention Parliament had contained a majority of Presbyterians, the new Parliament of May 1661 contained a majority of Anglicans, men with what Kishlansky describes as 'impeccable royalist credentials'.[47] Whiteman comments that the Laudian clergy who held positions in gentry and nobility houses during the Interregnum had done their work in influencing the men who made up the Cavalier Parliament.[48] As a result, 'the balance of power within the Church in England altered, almost overnight'.[49]

The direction was immediately clear: the new Parliament received the Lord's Supper according to the Book of Common Prayer, and the bishops returned to the Lords. Behind the years of cruelty to Nonconformists that would follow lay the zealous Anglicanism of the new MPs and many of the bishops, and, in some cases, their visceral desire to avenge their own suffering. Key figures had personal histories that made them determined royalists, for example, the two Archbishops of Canterbury: William Juxon had attended Charles I on the scaffold, and Gilbert Sheldon had himself been in prison in the 1640s and very involved with both Charles I and II. It was Sheldon who opined: 'Those who will not be governed as men, by reason and persuasion, shall be governed as beasts, by power and force'.[50] It was men such as these, and not the King or even Edward Hyde the Earl of Clarendon, who generated the cruelty of the misnamed 'Clarendon Code'. Their strength was in the Cavalier Parliament, and by May 1661 it was beyond the ability of either Presbyterians or Independents to do anything about it.

Indeed, even the King did not get his way. He attempted several times to soften the Restoration settlement. For example, he sought to amend the Bill of Uniformity of 1662 to allow him to permit incumbents not to wear the surplice, and not to make the sign of cross at baptism, provided they find someone else to conduct the service if it was desired, and provided they not criticize the church's position.[51] As Abernathy points out, this move would have enabled Charles 'to create a nonconformist branch of the Church of England by letters of dispensation to individual ministers'.[52] Clarendon introduced these measures into the Lords, but they were voted out in the lower house. Again we see the power of the Cavalier Commons. Another scheme of indulgence was attempted by Clarendon in August, but this time it was resisted by Sheldon. Toward the end of 1662 Charles did in fact issue a Declaration of Indulgence, but the discovery of a plot in Yorkshire to overthrow the government revived the action against dissent. If even the King could not get his way, we should be very reserved about blaming anyone other than the Parliament and bishops for the settlement and the Ejection.

The evil genius of the Clarendon Code

The Clarendon Code consisted of a series of Acts of Parliament that comprehensively excluded Nonconformists. They were excluded from the professions, from political and civil leadership (the 1661 Corporation Act), and from the church (the 1662 Act of Uniformity). Not only that, the Code eventually made their own private practice of nonconformity illegal (the 1664 Conventicle Act) and banned ejected clergy from living within five miles of their former charge (the 1665 Five Mile Act). Many nonconformist clergy were therefore left with no ministry, no church, no home, and no professional source of income. The settlement was designed to effect maximum exclusion

in order to neutralize Puritanism as a force within the Church of England, and then to prevent its practice beyond it. Conformity was made as hard as possible: for the clergy it involved swearing an oath of non-resistance to the king, disavowing the Solemn League and Covenant, accepting Anglican re-ordination, and professing 'unfeigned consent and assent' to everything in the revised Book of Common Prayer. Most of the 600 or so changes made in the 1662 Prayer Book made that harder rather than easier. It is particularly shocking that most of the 7,000 conforming clergy could not even have seen the text they were assenting to, since Calamy tells us that it was published only a few days before 24 August.[53] As Spurr explains, the settlement was not just an insistence on a national church, it was an insistence on a particularly exclusive form of church. 2,000 clergymen were ejected 'who would in principle have continued to serve *a* national church, but refused to serve *this* church *on these terms*'.[54]

There were particularly vindictive twists to the legislation. For example, the date on which the Act of Uniformity came into effect was 24 August, St Bartholomew's Day. Not only was this a day of ominous memory for the Reformed after the massacre of Huguenots in 1572, it was also the day on which tithes and rents were due to be paid in arrears, thus leaving nonconforming clergy significantly out of pocket. The legislation was tightened even further after the initial Acts. In 1670 a new Conventicle Act was passed that was intended to incentivize enforcement. Now an informer would receive a share of the fine paid, and penalties were added for officers who ignored evidence that the law was being broken. The Nonconformist's goods, tools, and even his cow could be seized, leaving him destitute. Andrew Marvel described this act as the 'quintessence of arbitrary malice'.[55]

The result of the legislation was, as Mark Goldie describes it, 'a persecution of Protestants by Protestants without parallel in seventeenth-century Europe'.[56] According to Matthews, 936 parish clergy were ejected in 1662, and a further 129 were ejected at undeterminable dates. Add the 695 ejected in 1660, and the 149 ejected from the Universities and schools, and we arrive at a total of 1,909 ejected in England.[57] Historians are agreed that the persecution of the Noncomformists was often harsh but was not consistently applied, either through time or space. Matthews puts this well: 'All the penal legislation was never enforced everywhere at one time, nor anywhere continuously throughout the reign. Certain years and certain places stand out in ugly pre-eminence as occasions and scenes of suffering.'[58] There was also some relief provided by wealthy benefactors. Calamy gives thirty cases of acute distress among the ejected clergy, but Matthews comments that 'these were exceptional'.[59] Some of the worst suffering was borne by those imprisoned; he numbers 215 ministers jailed for preaching or breaching the Five Mile Act.[60] The statistics hide tales of extraordinary cruelty and courage.

It is easy for us to conceive a distaste for the Clarendon Code and the persecution that followed it, but what *exactly* was wrong with the Anglican policy? What was the root moral problem with this legislation? The first problem with the settlement was that it involved enforcing a very particular ecclesiology and liturgy, to the exclusion of all alternatives. The legislation was given particular force by the Erastian context. The government's control of religion and its insistence on there being only one church permissible in the land meant that all men were bound by the Clarendon Code. While the Puritan Revolution brought a temporary end to the monarchy, it did not affect the deeply Erastian pattern of church-state relations. John Morrill notes that Cromwell established 'a radically Erastian church'.[61] Indeed, chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession gives an extraordinary degree of power to the magistrate, leaving a very restricted scope for the church's own authority:

> The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administrated, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.[62]

The problems caused by imposing a fixed settlement were magnified by the Erastianism of the seventeenth century that we find expressed in the Confession.

Lloyd-Jones argues in his 1962 lecture that the abiding Erastianism of the Puritan Revolution was part of its weakness. One of the reasons that he gives for the failure of the Puritans is that 'they started, as if it were beyond any need of demonstration or proof, with the fact of a State Church; and the whole point then resolved itself to this—should it be Episcopal, or should it be Presbyterian?'.[63] He suggests that the Puritans were too ready to equate England with ancient Israel and insists that the New Testament does not support a 'direct connection between church and State'.[64] I wish to reflect on this argument in order to qualify it. I agree that we should reject the kind of Erastian position that we see in the seventeenth century, though we should not be surprised that godly men who had known nothing else did not do so; indeed, it would have been extraordinary if they had challenged a principle that had operated since the time of Constantine. The risk, however, is that we over-react against a particular form of the connection between church and state into concluding that there should be *no* such connection. A state-controlled church is clearly unbiblical given the distinct spheres of authority in human life and the integrity of the church. While state control of the church has

undoubtedly been used for good, for example in the struggle against Arianism, it is not the biblical model. In that sense we need to be anti-Constantinian. But we must not confuse a state-*controlled* church with a state that explicitly submits itself to the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledges his authority. We do not want Constantine to control the church, but I believe that we should want him to bow the knee to Jesus and to rule accordingly. In that sense we should favour Constantinianism. That the Queen should be the Supreme Governor of the Church of England is an ecclesiological anomaly, but that she should speak to the nation of forgiveness in Christ is a blessing. In legislating for the theology of the church Parliament over-reaches itself, but in legislating in accord with the theology of the church she acts obediently to her Lord. You do not have to be a Van Tillian to know that there is no such thing as a religiously neutral state. Every state has a religion or religions, like every individual. A hundred years ago you might just have been able to believe that the secular world could run along quite happily without acknowledging Christ, perhaps governing successfully on the basis of natural law. But you could only have done so because the state was running on gospel residue, the after-effects of the spread of the gospel that had provided a Christian basis for the culture, its politics, and its morals. We have seen the residue washed away, and we are left with a state rushing into transparent rebellion against God and his law, even the natural law. We can see clearly the impossibility of a 'neutral' state governing well. There is a crucial difference between a state church and a state religion: we do not want a state church, but we should pray for the state religion to be truly (as opposed to merely formally) the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rigid Erastian context thus gave the Clarendon Code its particularly sharp teeth. If the Puritans had been free to worship elsewhere, then the impact of legislating in detail on liturgy in the Act of Uniformity would have been greatly reduced, and there would have been no Conventicle Act. But they were not free, and the Code was an assault on their biblically informed consciences. The Presbyterians in their Proposals of 1660 rightly appealed to the King using Paul's argument concerning the weaker brother:

> We humbly crave leave to beseech your majesty to consider whether, as a Christian magistrate, you be not as well obliged by that doctrine of the apostle touching things indifferent, in not occasioning an offence to weak brethren, as the apostle himself (then one of the highest officers in the church of Christ) judged himself to be obliged by.[65]

The whole Restoration settlement was a massive stumbling stone cast in the way of 2,000 godly ministers.

I do not mean to suggest that in a non-Erastian context tight legislation on liturgy for the Church of England would have been valid. While it is good for elements of written liturgy to be used regularly, the regulative principle,

even on a looser interpretation, argues against *prescribing* anything but the biblically defined elements of public worship. This is the second problem with the Clarendon Code: it involved the church legislating on matters on which the Lord has not legislated. It is one of the great ironies of church history that the bishops found themselves imposing fixed positions in what they themselves recognized were matters of indifference. In principle the issues were free, but when the King bound you, you were bound. As Charles II himself put it in the Worcester House Declaration, 'that which before was, and in itself is, indifferent, ceases to be indifferent, after it is once established by law'.[66] The Bishops argued that the Nonconformists should accept the imposition given that the matter was indifferent. The Nonconformists asked how it could be right to restrict freedom in a matter of indifference, as if it were a matter of obligation. Given that the Bible alone should prescribe the fixed elements of worship, they were right. When any church fixes matters with the force of law that are in Scripture indifferent, it oversteps the bounds of its own authority: 'You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you' (Deuteronomy 4:2). Such prescription was also a sure way to foster division, as John Hales had seen: 'to load our public forms with the private fancies upon which we differ, is the most sovereign way to perpetuate schism to the world's end.'[67] Of course, to say that we should not impose in areas of genuine indifference and conscientious dissent does not mean that it is always easy to delineate what those areas are. To do so we need to work hard at ascertaining what Scripture does and does not teach on the elements of worship with sufficient clarity as to be binding, but the effort is necessary to maintain biblical worship, to protect the weaker brother, and to preserve the unity of the church.

Lessons from the Great Ejection

There are many things we can learn from the events of the Great Ejection. At a general level, the lessons are quite obvious. The first is a lesson from the errors of the Anglican position in the 1660s: we should be very cautious about imposing fixed settlements when dealing with matters of indifference. This happens in different ways in different churches, and it is not a problem just for Anglicans. In fact, in the era of Common Worship some services in the Church of England are now flexible to the point of being unrecognizable. But what about free churches, unbound by the constraints of canon law? Well, how much variation do you have in your services? How far from the normal pattern would someone leading a service have to stray before the variation provoked a negative reaction? I find that conservative Nonconformist services are now more fixed by their unwritten liturgy than Anglican services are by their written. What would your congregation think if a visiting minister prayed

a much longer prayer after the sermon than before it? Or if you proposed standing to pray with hands lifted? Or if you handed out a written prayer for everyone to digest and then say together? Or if you said the Creed together? Presuming for a moment that these are at least matters of indifference (and of course that would need to be argued), would they be received with unease? Why is that? The human mind is in some contexts afflicted with neophilia, the love for all things new. But in others it is afflicted with an encrusted reactionary resistance to any variation. Perhaps there is merit in making sure that within the appropriate pattern of the biblically prescribed elements of worship a variety of forms is used. Otherwise, the sense is fostered that there is a single acceptable form, a sense little different in effect from the ancient Anglican insistence on the written Prayer Book. You may have *de facto* what the Church of England has *de jure*, and you may find that it is enforced with more rigidity.

Secondly, I think we learn from the 1660s that we must be alert to our local context in determining how much we require of people. I have argued that it was the exclusivism of the Erastian Restoration settlement that magnified its severity: if you cannot accept this, there is no permitted alternative. Today we still have a formally Erastian settlement, but the monopoly of the Church of England has been broken by toleration. So how might this lesson apply today? Here we see the difficulty of making direct applications from one century to another, even in the same country. But I think there may be an analogous situation for us today. If your church is in an area where there are other Bible-believing churches, then you might perhaps be relaxed about insisting on the more narrowly defined aspects of your theology and polity. For example, a Baptist church in a town with a genuinely evangelical pædobaptist church might maintain a tightly closed table because doing so would not leave any conscientious pædobaptists bound against their consciences to remain outside the fellowship of the Lord's people. Conversely, a presbyterian church in such a context might insist that its members baptize their babies. But if either church is the only gospel church within striking distance, then they might be prompted by the events of 1662 to consider taking a less tightly defined position. I am not sure that I think for certain that they should, and my strong pædobaptist convictions incline me the other way, but it is a question that 1662 makes me want at least to ask.

Finally, we must of course note that the Puritans have a lot to teach us in matters of conscience. Thomas Lye noted in his farewell sermon that steadfastness of conscience had been the 'genius' of his ministry, using the word in the old sense to refer to its spirit or characteristic.[68] There are some today who are too uptight, and who make some things into matters of conscience that ought not to be. But generally, I think the evangelical world in this country is insufficiently attendant to conscience. We are the children

of our age, and it is an age of utilitarian pragmatism. I have seen enough of evangelical life, and I know enough of myself, to conclude that Christian pastors, churches, and institutions will often seek to gain a good end by any means, fair or foul. In his farewell sermon of 1662 Thomas Brooks exhorted his people: 'Never put off your conscience with any plea or with any argument that you dare not stand by in the great day of your account.'[69] This is surely good advice. I may not be ashamed of my action when I look in the mirror or talk to my comrades in arms, but would I be ashamed of it before the spotlessly holy Lord Jesus Christ, the man who never used a sinful means to gain a good end?

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